Culver (G. M.)

COMPLIMENTS OF THE AUTHOR,
Dr. G. M. Culver

Notes on Zootic Cellulitis.

Reprint from the ALBANY MEDICAL ANNALS, *November, 1889.*

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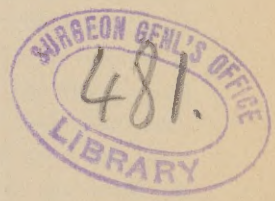

NOTES ON ZOOTIC CELLULITIS,

OR

"PINK-EYE."

By C. M. CULVER, M.A., M.D., Albany, N. Y.

The Albany Medical Annals, in its issue of July, 1889, told something of what I then thought of the use of the term "Pink-Eye." It has never afforded me much gratification to discuss this matter privately or publicly; it seems to involve too much of what Mr. Carter* calls the "personal element," and have too little of the scientific value which I should prefer to have characterize my published writing. But there are two ways in which the discussion may possess some utility. In the first place, some men have used the name because of its catchiness, and because it made them appear, to them with whom the name was a novelty, as enterprising, penetrating discoverers. I regard it as worth some pains to let charlatans know that *not everybody* is deceived by their *calembours*. Again, a colleague who has my cordial esteem, and who is perfectly "regular," told me, in September, that he had often called eye-troubles "pink-eye," in a jocular way, not knowing that the term had been abused, not meaning to call the victims of the ocular disorder either horses or asses, and not supposing it could be construed as a reflection on his colleagues. I did not get the impression that this gentleman had used the term in real diagnosis. Perhaps such gentlemen may be induced, by what has been published about "pink-eye," not to joke about the term; it appears to me that it would be advantageous if nobody would use the term as applied to any human disorder.

Robertson,† an authority in equine medicine, writes: "One manifestation of the catarrhal type of influenza—occa-

* Carter, American Journal of Ophthalmoly, Jan. 1889, page 19, line 33.

† Robertson, Practice of Equine Medicine, London, page 56.

sionally prevalent in certain seasons and in particular localities—has been, during late years, so distinctly marked and possessed of leading features so striking, notably the color of the conjunctival membrane, that it has by many been regarded and spoken of as a distinct and separate affection, under the name of pink-eye, or epizootic cellulitis. This, however, is probably better regarded as merely a modification of the simplest form of fever we are now examining than as an affection differing essentially from it."

This is under the heading "Influenza." The same author adds: "The conjunctiva is of a clear pink color, hence the name pink-eye."‡

Dr. Edward Moore, an Albany authority, a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, has told me that "pink-eye" is not even a distinct horse disease; that it differs from constitutional ophthalmia slightly, in appearance, greatly in reality, they being two affections, the former being only a symptom of influenza, and the latter a disease by itself; that "pink-eye" is not a human complaint, and not even a well-defined lower-animal disorder, but is simply a *form of epizootic influenza.*

Dr. Moore has since written to me: "Equine influenza assumes various types at different times, sometimes as a sporadic and at others as an epizootic disease. It is a febrile disease attended with great prostration of strength and with inflammation of some or all of the mucous membranes. In 1872 and 1873 the widespread horse sickness of America, commonly known as 'the epizootic,' was due to influenza of the catarrhal type, while the more recent outbreaks have been characterized largely by inflammation of the conjunctival membranes, and hence known in vulgar parlance as 'pink-eye.'"

Our famous collaborator, Mr. R. Brudenell Carter, of London, Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, has written to me, in a letter dated July 8, 1889: "In reply to your inquiry of the 19th of June, all I can say is that I have seen, within the last year or two, advertisements of some proprietary preparation as a remedy for 'pink-eye' in the horse;

‡ Note that the author thus quoted is discussing a horse-disease.

but I have never, to my knowledge, seen a case of this 'pink-eye,' and I do not in the least know what is meant by it. In all probability the name is applied by farmers, grooms and common people to several different ~~afferent~~ affections.

"With regard to the human subject, I have neither seen nor heard of any unusual form or unusual prevalence of conjunctivitis, either in hospital or in private practice; and, before replying to your inquiry, I have asked some of my colleagues, with the result of hearing that their experience has been the same as my own. The only information I can send is, therefore, that I have nothing to say."

In a letter dated September 26, '89, Dr. Charles A. Oliver, of Philadelphia, has written to me: "The reprint of 'Pink-Eye' has just reached me. Your question is very practical and to the point, and I am sincerely glad that you have taken the occasion to object to a meaningless vulgarism."

In a letter dated September 30, '89, Dr. Lewis H. Taylor, of Wilkesbarre, Penn., has written to me: "I have never seen any thing that I have diagnosed 'Pink-Eye.'"

In a letter dated October 23, '89, Dr. G. E. de Schweinitz, of Philadelphia, has written to me: "Pink-eye is a stupid name. I quite agree with you. It is curious how much it is used at the present time."

Dr. J. E. Weeks, formerly Resident Assistant Surgeon to the Ophthalmic and Aural Institute, of New York, has sent me a reprint of his valuable article on "The Pathogenic Microbe of 'Acute Catarrhal Conjunctivitis.'" On the cover of my copy, when it reached me, was, in manuscript, "Pink-Eye." In the article itself is plainly shown that the title of the paper gives the proper name of what has been miscalled "pink-eye."

Since I commenced investigating this pseudonymous disorder a pupil in the popular school alluded to in my former article on the *sobriquet* "Pink-Eye" called on me, having a marked case of acute catarrhal conjunctivitis. From the subjective history I knew that we were about to deal with a case of the formidable "pink-eye," concerning which I had heard so much. But nothing hinted that this case was part of an epidemic. The case in question was a somewhat se-

vere one, requiring that the spasm of the ~~contractor~~ sphincter *pupillæ* muscle; which is often one of the symptoms of acute catarrhal conjunctivitis, should be combated by the use of a mydriatic; but the conjunctivitis yielded to just such treatment as I have applied hundreds of times in similar cases, and I did not notice, during the time of its existence, any systemic weakness or any thing at all equine about the patient.

As an example of the catchiness of the name, I may add that she has since been *quasi* reproachful because I had not cited the case in the previous discussion, since I had told her, at the outset, that hers was a typical case of the so-called "pink-eye" that had been alleged to have invaded the school she attended.

The present writer hopes that this article may be a complement, rather than a supplement.

As applied to any human malady, "Pink-Eye" is what Dr. Oliver calls it, a "meaningless vulgarism."